

Feedback Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Our mission is to provide young people in Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire with a safe place they can stay, people they can trust and support to fulfil their potential. As a youth-led organisation our young people's views are important to us and guide our service development. Receiving and acting on feedback enables YMCA Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire to learn from issues that arise and improve our service to ensure that we provide young people with a safe place to stay and people they can trust.

2. KEY PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 Key principles of our feedback policy:
- The process to feedback on our service (either complaints or compliments) is easily accessible to all and can be done verbally, via our feedback form, in writing or by social media.
 - All feedback is taken seriously and responded to effectively, fairly and promptly, regardless of the format in which it is received.
 - All feedback is valuable to the organisation as it provides insight into day-to-day operations and can help the organisation improve. Receiving and acting on complaints allows issues to be resolved as soon as possible.
 - Staff are involved in responding to and resolving issues to develop ownership, decision-making and engagement.
 - Responding to, and acting on, feedback promotes a positive relationship and allows us to co-create services with our young people. Anonymous feedback is also considered and valued.
 - Complaints are managed in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaints Code.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 Feedback is any comment on our staff or service – compliments and complaints.

3.2 A complaint is defined as:

"an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group."

3.3 Examples of complaints are about the standard of service received from a staff member, repairs not completed on time or repairs not completed to a high enough standard.

3.4 The following are not complaints:

- a) Reports of incidents or issues caused by young people. These should be recorded as a concern, and if necessary managed by the relevant staff member or Manager in accordance with our Positive Change Policy. It is not classed as a complaint unless the young person refers to repeated issues and specifically requests to complain about the way YMCA Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire is managing the issue.
- b) Service requests for maintenance or chasers of service requests - because to do so would delay the issue being addressed. These are only treated as complaints if the young person specifically requests it is treated as a complaint; if the issue cannot be resolved; or if we have missed our stated response time. In this case, efforts to address the service request must continue as well as addressing the complaint.
- c) Support chasers, such as a missed appointment. These should be resolved immediately and not considered as a complaint unless the young person specifically wishes to record a complaint.
- d) Survey feedback. Although this is not considered as a complaint, surveys should include information on how to make a complaint.

3.5 A compliment is defined as:

"an expression of praise or admiration"

4. ACCESSIBILITY AND AWARENESS

4.1 Feedback can be received in person, via a feedback form, in writing (which includes email) or via social media.

- 4.2 The word “complaint” or “compliment” does not have to be used for the feedback to be treated as a such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction, staff must give the resident the choice to make a complaint in any format that meets the needs of the complainant. A complaint submitted by a third party, such as a parent, must be handled in line with this policy. This ensures that we take into account our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and make reasonable adjustments. A high volume of complaints is not considered to be negative. This can indicate a well-publicised and accessible complaints process.
- 4.3 YMCA Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire’s feedback process is provided to all young people as part of their introduction to our service and is well publicised, for example:
- a) in housing move in packs;
 - b) available on our website; and
 - c) summarised whenever we seek feedback from the young people that we serve (e.g. through our annual Resident Satisfaction Survey).

5. CATEGORISING AND ACTIONING FEEDBACK

- 5.1 Regardless of the format in which the feedback is received, it must first be categorised. There are three groups of feedback – each of which are handled differently. These are outlined in the table below.

Feedback type	Action
Compliment	Acknowledged and recorded.
Concern about behaviour of other residents	Acknowledged and managed by staff member receiving the report. Advice provided and recorded if necessary. Relevant staff member or Manager informed if necessary.
Complaint about service or staff	Investigated by the management team, response provided in writing. Recorded on CRM (In-Form) unless a complaint about staff, which is recorded by HR Team ¹ .

¹ As a small organisation it would be easy for staff to identify which resident had complained about them. To avoid residents being treated differently if they complain about a resident, all complaints about staff are recorded confidentially by the HR Team.

6. RESPONDING TO COMPLIMENTS

- 6.1 Compliments are an important type of feedback; they tell us what is working well in our service and they should be celebrated. Managers are encouraged to do this in their team meetings, so that learning can be shared with relevant members of the team.
- 6.2 If the compliment comes in the form of a gratitude (for example flowers, cake or chocolates) staff must be aware of maintaining appropriate professional boundaries. The gesture should be logged as a compliment, but staff should also refer to the Professional Boundaries policy for guidance. Gratitude's wherever possible should be shared across the whole team. Gratitude's should be notified to a manager before any other action is taken (e.g. eaten!).

7. RECEIVING COMPLAINTS

- 7.1 The Complaint Handling Team at YMCA Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire is made up of managers, heads of department and members of the senior leadership team (subsequently collectively referred to as Managers). These staff members are appropriately trained to handle complaints, and the complaint is passed to an appropriate member of this team. Complaint handling is a core service, and learning from complaints is a core part of the investigation. This team acts sensitively and fairly, is trained to deal with distressed young people, can facilitate quick resolution of complaints, has access to staff at all levels to facilitate prompt resolution of complaints and has the authority and autonomy to resolve disputes fairly. Residents are not treated differently if they complain. All staff involved in complaint handling, including front-line employees who may receive a complaint, must:
 - a) have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments;
 - b) take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and
 - c) act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.
- 7.2 Complaints about **service** are handled by the appropriate manager. If escalated to stage 2, they are managed by the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team.

- 7.3 Complaints about **staff** are handled by the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team. If these are escalated to stage 2, they are managed by the Deputy C.E.O. or the C.E.O.

Complaints which will not be considered, escalated or responded to

- 7.4 Any complaint will be considered based on its individual circumstances. Examples of issues that will not be considered under our complaints procedure are:
- Complaints that are about an issue that occurred over 12 months ago - unless relating to health and safety or safeguarding, when Manager discretion will be applied.
 - Issues that have previously been considered through our complaints process.
 - Complaints where the complainant has begun legal proceedings.
- 7.5 In these cases a detailed explanation will be given to the person raising the issue as to why it is not suitable to be considered complaints process and setting out the right to take that decision to the relevant body (e.g. Housing Ombudsman).
- 7.6 Complaints which are submitted to us anonymously – for example from an email address where the sender's identity, relationship to the organisation or intent cannot be verified will still be considered, as these complaints may help us to improve our service. However, anonymous complaints have a risk of false or duplicate submissions and could divert resources from legitimate resident concerns. It is also likely that there will be insufficient detail or context making it difficult to effectively investigate or provide a meaningful response. For these reasons, YMCA Milton Keynes & Northamptonshire will not respond to anonymous complaints.
- 7.7 Anonymous complaints of a serious nature will be considered as to whether they meet the threshold of a "relevant failure", as defined in our Whistleblowing policy, if they do they will be addressed under that policy, rather than as a complaint.

8. OUR APPROACH TO COMPLAINT HANDLING

- 8.1 Complaints are logged and acknowledged within 5 working days of receiving the complaint, early resolution of issues is key to effective complaint handling. This is stage 1 of our complaint handling procedure. In every communication with the young person, they are given the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with YMCA staff. When acknowledging the complaint, YMCA MK & N confirms understanding and seeks clarification of the "complaint definition" (i.e. understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking). This can often be best achieved in a meeting, then followed up by letter. Any aspects that YMCA MK & N is not responsible for are clarified at this stage. Opportunity exists at this point or any other for the complaint to be resolved immediately to meet the needs of the complainant. In this case, a written response should still be sent following resolution (see 8.5 below). If the young person does not agree to meet, the complaint must still be investigated with the information available. Complaints are investigated thoroughly and a response is provided to the complainant within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged, unless an extension is needed to allow full investigation, in which case this is agreed with the complainant in advance and suitable intervals for updates must be agreed. Any extensions must be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the young person.
- 8.2 The complainant, and if applicable, any staff member, are given a fair chance to set out their position and comment on any findings before any final decision is made.
- 8.3 All investigations are conducted in an independent and impartial manner, dealing with the complaint on its merits and addressing any actual or perceived conflict of interest. All information and evidence is considered carefully and kept as confidential as possible, only disclosing information that is necessary to properly investigate. Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. If the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.
- 8.4 Following investigation, the complainant is provided with a written response. Where something has gone wrong, YMCA Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire acknowledges this and sets out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include:

- a) Apologising;
- b) Acknowledging where things have gone wrong;
- c) Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons;
- d) Taking action if there has been delay;
- e) Reconsidering or changing a decision;
- f) Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum;
- g) Providing a financial remedy; and
- h) Changing policies, procedures or practices.

- 8.5 For both this stage and stage 2 (below) the response must, in clear, plain language, confirm the complaint stage, address all points raised in the complaint definition, make clear the decision, and provide reasons for decisions, referencing relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate. It must include details of how to escalate further if necessary. It must set out the actions YMCA Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right and clearly set out what will happen and by when. This must then be followed-through to completion. Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the young person as a result of any fault identified and take account of guidance issued by the Housing Ombudsman. YMCA Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire will carefully manage the expectations of the complainant and does not agree to anything that cannot be delivered or would cause unfairness to others. This will be following discussion with the complainant where appropriate. A response must be provided when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issues are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the young person.
- 8.6 We make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. Any reasonable adjustment is recorded on In-Form, as well as any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments are kept under active review.
- 8.7 YMCA Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire also looks beyond the circumstances of the individual complainant, identifying process or system changes that will improve our service more generally. Complaints are a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery. Any learning is used to amend policies, procedures, and practices, or identify systemic issues or risks. They also inform staff training. Wider learning

and improvements are reported to residents, staff and the Board as appropriate.

- 8.8 Where the complainant is not satisfied with YMCA Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire's response, they may escalate their complaint to our stage 2 complaint handling procedure within 1 month of receiving our response. Any escalation within one month will not be refused. Any escalation later than 1 month will be considered as to whether it would be more appropriate to escalate or to open a new complaint at stage 1. At this stage, the complaint must be acknowledged, defined and logged within 5 working days of the escalation being received. When acknowledging the complaint, YMCA MK & N confirms understanding and seeks clarification of the "complaint definition" (i.e. understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking). This can often be best achieved in a meeting, then followed up by letter. Any aspects that YMCA MK & N is not responsible for are clarified at this stage. It must then be investigated within 20 working days of escalation, unless an extension is needed, in which case this is explained to and agreed with the complainant in advance and suitable intervals for updates must be agreed. Residents are required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. The complaint handler at stage 2 must make reasonable efforts to understand why the young person remains unhappy. Stage 2 is YMCA Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire's final response.
- 8.9 If they are unhappy with the outcome of YMCA Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire's investigations, they can escalate their complaint to the appropriate body. For complaints regarding our housing service, this is the Housing Ombudsman, see section 10 below.
- 8.10 If the young person's behaviour is deemed unacceptable when pursuing the complaint, we follow the relevant Positive Change Process, and evidence for this must be recorded.

9. RECORD KEEPING

- 9.1 Compliments and complaints regarding our housing service are recorded on our Housing Management Database, In-Form. We keep full records of complaints, including all correspondence, any review and the outcomes at each stage on the database, unless the complaint relates to a specific member of staff. In this case, a brief summary of the complaint is recorded on In-Form, and detail is recorded on the Managers Drive or HR Drive, depending on the nature of the complaint.

- 9.2 Compliments regarding our non-residential services are saved on the appropriate database.

10. HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE

- 10.1 The Housing Ombudsman Service is available at any time to help residents understand the complaints process or to help residents make a complaint. A resident can contact the Housing Ombudsman at any time during the complaint process. All written correspondence with a complainant, at any time during the complaint process, must include information about the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 10.2 The Housing Ombudsman can investigate if the young person wants to complain about the way YMCA Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire has handled a complaint.

Tel: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Post: Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ

11. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 11.1 Receiving and responding to feedback procedure for Housing Team
- 11.2 Data Protection (GDPR) Policy
- 11.3 Equal Opportunities Policy
- 11.4 Positive Change Policy
- 11.5 Positive Change procedure
- 11.6 Professional Boundaries Policy
- 11.7 Whistleblowing Policy

12. CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

- 12.1 YMCA Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire carries out an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaints Code to ensure complaint handling remains in line with requirements. Self-assessment would also be done if there is significant re-structure, merger and/or change in relevant policies or procedures, or if a review of the self-assessment is requested by the Housing Ombudsman. The outcome of any self-assessment is reported to the Senior Leadership Team and the Board of Trustees.
- 12.2 Complaints and compliments can help identify issues and can lead to improvements in service delivery. Complaints and compliments are recorded in our monthly KPIs which are reported to the Senior Leadership Team, the Director responsible for complaint handling and the Board Member Responsible for Complaints and the Board of Trustees. This allows for senior management to identify trends, systemic issues, risks or policies and procedures that require revision. They also inform staff training. Wider learning, trends and improvements relating to complaints are reported as they occur to staff and, if relevant, to the Senior Leadership Team. These are reported annually to the Senior Leadership Team, the Board Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) and the Board of Trustees in our "Annual Feedback Performance and Service Improvement Report", which the Trustees respond to. The report covers:
- a) the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements.
 - b) a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept;
 - c) any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman;
 - d) the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;
 - e) any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and
 - f) any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.
- 12.3 In exceptional circumstances (e.g. a cyber incident), where YMCA MK & N is unable to comply with this policy and or the Housing Ombudsman's Code the Ombudsman must be informed, information must be provided to affected residents and publish this on our website, providing a timescale to returning to compliance with the Code.

Document Information				
Version	Policy Lead	Assured By	Review Cycle	Review Date
Version 2.4	Director of Resident Services (Nicola Walker)	CEO (Simon Green)	3 Year	Nov 2028



Here for young people
Here for communities
Here for you

YMCA enables people to develop their full potential in mind, body and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to, our Christian values, we create supportive, inclusive and energising communities, where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.

FAMILY & YOUTH WORK

HEALTH & WELLBEING

HOUSING

TRAINING & EDUCATION

SUPPORT & ADVICE